

18 September 2022

Bobby Duncan
Yucaipa City Council
cc David Avila

I attended the September 12 City Council meeting where I spoke out against item 27, the proposed Serrano development on Yucaipa Ridge Road. You asked a couple of questions of the community during the discussion period of the meeting. You asked, "Where were we during planning meetings?" and "What is it we want?" I really wanted to answer you. Number one, I would like to attend the future AVA meetings. Is that possible? Number two; we want developers to plan developments that do not exploit loopholes to the detriment of the surrounding communities. We don't object to all cluster developments, just this one.

The 50/50 concept seems like a good one with a couple of caveats. If I understand the concepts of the 50/50 idea..... If you have 100 acres of buildable property, under the 50/50 concept, a developer uses 50 acres for grape vines and builds 100 houses on the other 50 acres; in some type of cluster arrangement. This benefits the city because you do not have block after block of typical suburbs. The city retains a more rural feel with clear open space, hillside protections, space for wildlife and trails as well as agriculture, specifically vineyards, which will bring income to the city. Who will own these set aside vineyards?

This plan seems fine, even desirable. However, it is *not*, if developers take property that is not buildable and use that to boost their acreage total specifically to increase the number of homes they can build. This is what the community feels is happening here. This concept must have felt like a gift to the Serrano developers. It almost seems custom made for their uses. They had land they could NOT build on, but land upon which someone could plant. This property has previously been studied and was permitted to support 34 homes. That left behind unbuildable areas, areas that could always have been leased for agriculture use, in much the way it was recently proposed. But because of your 50/50 concept, it looked like they could use those unbuildable acres to increase their total number of houses to 51 or 52. Obviously they thought their plan was close enough to concept, to get approval. This is *not* how your concept is supposed to work. 100 BUILDABLE acres, 50 donated for agriculture and 100 homes on the other 50.

Under your concept, Serrano has 34 buildable acres; 16 for agriculture and 34 homes on the other 16. However, they want credit for the extra 18 acres that can't be built on. Serrano is dealing with hillside protections, earthquake faults, blue-line restrictions, as well as being in a high fire area. These things make this acreage uniquely difficult. So, while on paper it looks like they are splitting up a 52 acre parcel into 26/26 that doesn't really apply. There are too many restrictions to building. No one can build 52 individual one acre lots on this parcel. It remains 34 buildable acres. The community does not miss this point.

I believe the community will support a cluster of 30-34 homes on this property with appropriate egress. We would rather have no development but that is wishful thinking on our parts. We completely understand that the developer and owner want to make as much money as possible. However, by pushing the number of homes to what they felt *might* be possible; they lost all hope of community support. The Council may decide to ignore the wishes of the population on the North Bench, but that way leads to law suits and community protest. Most of us, while preferring one or MORE acres per home, can get behind your 50/50 concept, because ultimately it may serve our city well. Just be fair about what you approve or plan to approve in the future.

One note: Appropriate egress is essential up here. We burn regularly. We are already very congested when trying to outrun fire. What does the fire department recommend as regards to egress?